

Grants Mining District: San Mateo Creek Basin

McKinley and Cibola Counties, New Mexico

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This Fact Sheet will tell you about...

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Grants Mining District: San Mateo Creek Basin

The Grants Mining District comprises an area of 100 miles by 25 miles in northwest New Mexico where uranium extraction and production activities occurred from the 1950s to the late 1980s. The Atomic Energy Commission was the sole purchaser of yellowcake produced from the 1940's through 1970. Over 52 million tons of uranium ore were extracted from these mines, constituting approximately 68% of the total uranium ore mined in the United States during this period.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Department of Agriculture, New Mexico Environmental Department (NMED), New Mexico Mining and Minerals Division (NMMMD) and the New Mexico Department of Health are working to address radiological contamination throughout the Grants Mining District (GMD).

The San Mateo Creek Basin lies with the Grant Mining District. EPA has been investigating impacts from mining activities to the underlying water bearing units within the San Mateo Creek Basin. Many of these legacy mines operated as wet mines where the underground workings were dewatered and the collected mine water was discharged (untreated and treated) to nearby surface drainage features, including San Mateo Creek and Arroyo del Puerto. The mine discharge water infiltrated into the soils and sediment and significantly re-saturated portions of the alluvium and underlying bedrock aquifers throughout the basin. These operations have contributed to degradation of the groundwater quality within the basin.

Current Status: San Mateo Creek Basin

EPA Region 6, with assistance from the NMED and the U.S. Geological Survey, initiated a phased groundwater investigation for the San Mateo Creek basin as part of an Expanded Site Inspection (ESI) to assess the nature and extent of contamination in the alluvial aquifer related to legacy uranium mining and milling. The results from Phase 1 were released in November 2016. Phase 2 is currently underway and should be released later this year.

EPA is currently evaluating this site for potential National Priorities List (NPL) proposal and conducting outreach activities with state, tribes and local community partners. As part of this outreach EPA sent a letter to the New Mexico Environment Department in November 2017, seeking the State of New Mexico's concurrence on the potential National Priorities List proposal of hazardous substances releases within the San Mateo Creek Basin. EPA received a letter of support for potential NPL inclusion from New Mexico on January 12, 2018.

For more information, please contact...

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Inquiries from the news media should be directed to the EPA Region 6 Press Office at 214.665.2200.

The primary GMD Information Repository, which <https://www.epa.gov/grants-mining-district>

To receive future mailings electronically in portable document format (PDF), contact Adam Weece/U.S. EPA by e-mail at weece.adam@epa.gov and provide your name and e-mail address